

## Ashtray

An ashtray, which is lined with coins  
sits at my windowsill. I treat it as if  
it belongs to a museum, like an artifact  
from Aztec civilization; like this signifies  
North America's first sign of a currency;  
but these are Mexican coins, newly expired.

The Ashtray fakes off a culture that I don't have.  
I can imagine them in the real world as  
poor peasant money, authentic and beautiful.  
The dirty metallic coin clenched in a Hispanic hand,  
the scent of sweat, soil, and brass comprise  
a culture that I have long since abandoned.

The man with the beads of sweat  
lining his face from the heat and humidity,  
his deep red skin feeling the days wages,  
rattles the change in his pocket that he  
imagines to be small bits of gold.

He sits at the counter and waits as  
coins are lifted from his pocket.  
A cerveza is bought and drank down  
so fast that it almost pours down his face;  
the streaks of liquid shine against the midday sun.

Being deemed to old for use, the coins are  
cleaned, polished, and waxed.  
These coins are gently lined  
against an artificial metallic base to offer me,  
a meaning as extinct as the coins themselves.

The ashtray is what results but,  
I don't smoke anymore than I speak Spanish.  
I'll keep it there,  
Reminding me as I think to myself  
why the hell I learned French.

-Abel Contreras